

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the present amendments and following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 are pending. Claims 1-3 and 6-22 were cancelled in a previous amendment. Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 are amended. Support for the amendments to Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 can be found at page 10, line 17 – page 13, line 1 of the specification, and in Figs. 1, 3, and 4, for example. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. Claims 5 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite.

At the outset, Applicants note with appreciation the courtesy of a telephone discussion granted by Primary Examiner Sameh Tawfik on October 3, 2006. The substance of the telephone discussion is substantially summarized below in accordance with MPEP § 713.04.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

Amended independent Claim 4 recites:

A packing method comprising:  
    providing a pallet;  
    placing an article on the pallet; and  
    fixing the article on the pallet, wherein  
        an article-fixing member is accommodated in an  
        accommodating space internal to the pallet such that the article-  
        fixing member can be pulled out from the accommodating  
        space when the article is to be packed and is wound around the  
        article to firmly fix the article on the pallet, wherein  
            a removable ceiling plate which can be opened and  
            closed is used, when the article is packed, the removable ceiling  
            plate is removed, the article-fixing member is wound around a  
            surface of the article below a position where the ceiling plate  
            will be once the removable ceiling plate is replaced, a cover is  
            disposed between the position where the removable ceiling  
            plate will be once the removable ceiling plate is replaced and  
            the article, and then, the ceiling plate is replaced, and

the article is an image forming apparatus, the surface of the article is a document table located below the ceiling plate, the image forming apparatus is provided at its upper surface with an automatic document feeder having a document catch tray which can open and close with respect to the document table, and the document catch tray has a shape which stands up, the article-fixing member is wound around the document table located below the automatic document feeder having the article-fixing member which can open and close, thereby fixing the image forming apparatus on the pallet.

The outstanding Office Action indicated that the phrase, "a ceiling plate which can be opened and closed is used" is not enabled by the original disclosure.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the phrase "which can be opened and closed" is deleted.

The outstanding Office Action indicated that the phrase, "a cover which covers an inner periphery of the closed ceiling plate is disposed, the surface of the article below the ceiling plate and the ceiling plate are fixed to each other through the cover" was not clear and that the original disclosure does not indicate how the ceiling plate and the article are fixed to each other through the cover. Claim 4 is amended to recite that the cover is disposed between the article and a position where the removable ceiling plate will be when the removable ceiling plate is installed. The phrase indicated in the outstanding Office Action as unclear is deleted in amended independent Claim 4. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph is overcome.

Claims 5, 23, and 24 incorporate substantially similar amendments to those discussed above regarding amended independent Claim 4. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 5, 23, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102, first paragraph is overcome.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 5 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, that rejection is respectfully traversed. Claims 5 and 24 are amended to clarify that the second instance of "a cover" recited in each of Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 refers to the same cover as the first instance recited in each of those Claims. In other words, the second

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<sup>1</sup> Outstanding Office Action, page 5.

instance of "a cover" is amended to recite "the cover" in each of amended Claims 5 and 24. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 5 and 24 as indefinite is overcome.

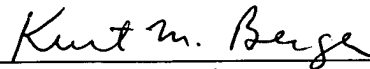
As the above-noted amendments are unrelated to the claimed features discussed in the Statement of Reasons for Allowance provided in the Notice of Allowance dated March 14, 2006, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claims 4, 5, 23, and 24 patentably distinguish over the references of record for at least the reasons presented in the March 14, 2006, Notice of Allowance.

The above-noted amendments were discussed with Examiner Tawfik during the telephone discussion of October 3, 2006. In the telephone discussion, Examiner Tawfik indicated that a detailed review of a formally submitted amendment would be required before making any final determination regarding patentability.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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